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NEWS

Britepaths Launches School Supply Drive

Goal to provide supplies to 2,500 school children in central Fairfax.

Fairfax-based non-profit Britepaths (formerly Our Daily Bread) is seeking volunteers from the community to donate funds, backpacks and calculators to assist students in need who attend schools in the Fairfax County area as part of its annual Collect for Kids Back to School Program.

Britepaths' goal is to provide supplies for at least 2,500 students who attend schools in the Fairfax High School pyramid, J.E.B. Stuart High School pyramid, and a few other central Fairfax schools. Britepaths provides the supplies to its partner schools for distribution to students with demonstrated need. In 2016, Britepaths assisted 2,600 children.

Community members interested in helping may make a donation through Britepaths' secure on-line donation page at britepaths.org or mail a check to 4080 Chain Bridge Road, 2nd Floor, Fairfax, VA 22030. Write "BTS" in the memo line. Donations of new backpacks and scientific calculators are also welcome. They may be brought to Britepaths' offices through Aug. 5, Mondays through Fridays between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. (office is closed on July 3 and 4).

Additional local donation drop-off sites are listed below and on Britepaths' web site. Backpacks may also be ordered and shipped directly to Britepaths through "wish lists" on Amazon.com and DollarDays.com. For more information on donating or sponsoring the program, contact Joanne Walton at 703-273-8829 or jwalton@britepaths.org, or visit britepaths.org.

Britepaths is collaborating with Fairfax County's Collect for Kids partnership, which includes Kids R First, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), the Fairfax County Office of Public-Private Partnerships

and a variety of local non-profit organizations and businesses, to serve as many FCPS students in need as possible by purchasing high-quality school supplies at discounted prices.

The partnership allows Britepaths to provide all the supplies a student needs for approximately \$15 per student (and often \$10 or less for elementary students), where it can often cost \$40 or more per child to purchase all the necessary supplies from retail stores.

These businesses are partnering with Britepaths this summer to serve as donation drop-off sites:

- ❖ Gathering Grounds Cafe (At University Mall, 10637 Braddock Road, Fairfax)
- ❖ Dr. Gene Sweetnam, OD (5204A Rolling Road, Burke)
- ❖ Quest Diagnostics (14225 Newbrook Drive, Chantilly)
- ❖ Solaris Laser and Skin Care (513 Maple Ave. W, Vienna)
- ❖ Spine and Joint Institute (9990 Fairfax Blvd. #115, Fairfax)
- ❖ STEM exCEL (4010 University Dr. #104, Fairfax)
- ❖ Sugar Mama's Ice Cream (11208 Lee Hwy, Fairfax)
- ❖ Union Bank Burke (6050 Burke Commons Road, Suite A, Burke)
- ❖ Westminster School's Camp Griffin (3819 Gallows Road, Annandale)

Britepaths is grateful to its flagship sponsor of the 2017 Collect for Kids Back to School Program, MAXIMUS Foundation, which provided a \$3,000 grant that will assist more than 200 students, as well as the American Association of University Women, Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church and Our Lady of Good Counsel for sponsoring the program. And a special thank you to the Rotary Club of Bailey's Crossroads, which for the sixth year is partnering with Britepaths to help fund and deliver supplies to Bailey's Elementary, Glasgow Middle School and JEB Stuart High School.

The following organizations are running donation drives to support the Program: Deepwood Pool, Girls Inspired and Ready to Lead, Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia Camps Achva and Kadima, Laurel Ridge Elementary Student Council Association, Lake View Pool and Unity of Fairfax.

More information is available at britepaths.org.

Talk with Children about Social Media Dangers

With summer break here, children and teens have more free time to explore, learn and grow; but the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB) asks parents to be mindful and keep a vigilant watch over social media apps and games on their children's phones and devices. There are some unhealthy "games" reportedly present in our community, some involving forms of aggression, bullying or threats.

Among these is the "Blue Whale Challenge," as well as copycat versions, that have recently been reported to local school personnel here in Fairfax County.

These "games" reportedly target children between ages 10-14 and encourage them to complete a series of progressively more intense tasks over a 50-day period, including self-harm and, finally, suicide.

While many reports indicate that this "game" is a hoax; it is more important than ever for families to increase their digital literacy

Available Resources

Mental health resources available to students and families throughout the summer include:

- ❖ FCPS School Counseling Services at 571-423-4420 or www.fcps.edu/resources/student-safety-and-wellness/school-counseling-services
- ❖ School Psychology Services at 571-423-4250 or www.fcps.edu/resources/student-safety-and-wellness/school-psychology-services
- ❖ School Social Work Services at 571-423-4300 or www.fcps.edu/resources/student-safety-and-wellness/school-social-work-services

❖ PRS CrisisLink Hotline at 703-527-4077, text "CONNECT" to 855-11 (available 24/7) or prsinc.org/crisislink/services/crisislink-hotlines/

❖ Merrifield Emergency Services 703-573-5679 (available 24/7) or www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/services/acute-care.htm

❖ CSB Entry and Referral during business hours at 703-383-8500 or www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/services/assessment.htm.

❖ More about the Blue Whale Challenge is available from FCPS at fcpsnet.fcps.edu/ssse/documents/BlueWhaleChallenge.pdf.

and do their research on such potentially deadly "games" children may be invited to "play."

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people in Virginia between ages 15-34 and the third leading cause of death for ages 10-14.

The CSB urges adults to:

- ❖ Talk to your children about responsible cyber safety.
- ❖ Check phones or other devices for signs of a hashtag or communication

with anyone telling your children to do specific tasks.

❖ Discuss websites, links and social media apps your child is using.

❖ Know warnings of psychological distress. Signs may include changes in behavior (e.g. outbursts or being withdrawn) or physical health (e.g. weight loss or gain; loss of appetite), hopelessness, sadness, boredom and depression.

❖ If you see signs of distress, ask if they are considering suicide. Asking about suicide does not increase risk of suicide.

❖ Be aware of suicide prevention information and resources.